

Was Pres. Shonts (The New York Traction Magnate) "Vamped"

How "My Friend Amanda Thomas," Chorus Girl, Twice Married and Twice Divorced, Won the Old Millionaire's Affection and Turns Up With a "Will" That Gives Her His Estate

MRS. AMANDA THOMAS began her career as a chorus girl. But she has enacted more really melodramatic parts since she left the stage than she did during her brief footlight experience.

On this page to-day is told one of the highly dramatic episodes in the life of the late Theodore P. Shonts's sweetheart. Shonts and Amanda had toured America and Europe together and had been on most intimate terms in New York for several years—and all this time Amanda was the wife of Herbert Thomas. For some reason Shonts and Amanda suddenly decided in the early part of 1914 to set the stage for a divorce from Mr. Thomas.

Thomas had moved to Boston, and it was in that city the scenes of Amanda's divorce drama were enacted. For nine long weeks her detectives trailed Thomas, and as the trap was ready to be sprung word was sent to Mrs. Thomas, and Amanda hurried

over to Boston to play the leading part at the climax of the tragedy. As the door of the apartment was forced open Amanda made a spectacular entrance into the room and, enacting the role of the Wronged Wife, shouted:

"You dirty man!"

Turning to the embarrassed young woman in the apartment, Mrs. Thomas, with melodramatic effect, said:

"Do you know that Herbert Thomas is a married man, and the father of a child?"

And then, returning to the protection of her rich admirer, Shonts, the pair went to Europe for the Summer. In the Fall Amanda got her final divorce decree.

Did the Shonts money pay for Mrs. Thomas's divorce, as it did for Amanda's other expenses all those years, Mrs. Shonts, the penniless widow, would like to know.



Flashlight photograph of the Beaumont Sisters and the shapely and lively chorus of the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" Company. Mrs. Thomas was a member of this chorus, and at that time was known as Jeanne Caskie or "Red Top."

CHAPTER XVII.

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(Continued from "Last Sunday")

WHAT has become of the Shonts millions?

If the handsome fortune which Theodore P. Shonts recently possessed has slipped out of his hands into the lap of Mrs. Amanda C. Thomas—will she be permitted to keep it while the widow of Shonts lives in poverty?

In three separate lawsuits Mrs. Shonts's lawyers, Judge Warren Dixon and George W. Files, are endeavoring to trace the missing millions and get them back again. These three legal actions are:

(1) To get possession of the Shonts furniture and personal belongings which Mrs. Thomas has seized and put in storage.

(2) To have Mrs. Shonts reinstated as administratrix of her husband's estate instead of the close personal friends of Mrs. Thomas, and,

(3) The suit for one million dollars damages against Mrs. Thomas for alienating the traction magnate's affections.

Mrs. Thomas denies all of Mrs. Shonts's charges and is fighting hard to hold her grip on the Shonts property. Many questions Mrs. Shonts's lawyers want Mrs. Thomas to answer, but she has delayed, resisted and avoided various efforts to summon her to court to explain things.

It was remarked last Sunday that Shonts and Amanda were on most intimate terms in New York, and were travelling about Europe together for years while Amanda was still the wife of Herbert Thomas. Shonts met the Thomas woman in 1906 and soon deserted his family, and year after year became more and more closely tied up with Mrs. Thomas—but it was not until 1914, eight years later, that Mrs. Thomas bothered to get a divorce from Mr. Thomas.

The meeting of Amanda, the chorus girl of the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" company, and the nineteen-year-old high school boy, Herbert Thomas, was told quite fully in these columns last Sunday. Amanda was then married, but she quickly got a divorce and married the Thomas boy, who was a millionaire New York banker's son.

But in 1907 the Wall Street panic completely cleaned out the fortune of young Thomas and his banker father. This made very little difference to Amanda, apparently. She had met Shonts in 1906. If her young husband, Herbert Thomas, was practically penniless, she managed to thrive in comfort and luxury just the same; although her husband contributed not a dollar to her support.

In view of the relations of Shonts and "my friend Amanda" the story of Amanda's divorce from Mr. Thomas is extremely interesting. The court records of New York were so heavily weighted with judgments against young Thomas for clothes, etc., purchased and never paid for by Amanda that he took up residence in Boston. It was in Boston, therefore, that evidence would have to be sought against Thomas for his wife's divorce suit.

It took no little time, money and expense to get together the evidence. Where did the money come from? In 1914 Amanda had no apparent means of support or income, so far as Mrs. Shonts can find out. She had not been living with her husband and had not received a dollar from him in eight years (just the length of time she had known Shonts). And Amanda was not working.

Where did the money come from to pay the expenses of Mrs. Thomas's divorce suit, Mrs. Shonts wants to know. It was quite an elaborate and expensive campaign of detectives, lawyers, affidavits, etc., and finally, in the last act, Amanda herself comes on the scene and with melodramatic effect plays the part of wronged wife. Amanda, herself a married woman, leaves her rich sweetheart, Shonts, long enough to run over to Boston as the detectives close in on Herbert Thomas, and in righteous indignation shouts:

"You dirty man!"

It was a dramatic climax in that room in that Boston apartment which had taken a long time to work up. It was all told very fully in the divorce evidence. The

dramatis personae who got together the evidence for Mrs. Thomas are:

The Wronged Wife.....Mrs. Herbert F. Thomas
Friend and "Social Secretary" of Wronged Wife,
Louise Yeoman
Chief Detective of Wronged Wife.....William H. Benjamin
First Assistant Detective.....Detective Turner
Second Assistant Detective.....Detective Duren
Third Assistant Detective.....Mrs. Benjamin
Wronged Wife's Brother.....John J. Caskie
(Employee of Shonts's Interborough)
Witness for Wronged Wife.....Fannie L. Beals
Witness for Wronged Wife.....Lena J. Rives
Witness for Wronged Wife.....Alice J. Mitchell
Lawyer for Wronged Wife.....Mr. Barnes
The "Dirty Man".....Mr. Thomas
Judge, Referee, Commissioners, the Woman in the Case,
the Offending Husband's Lawyer, etc., etc., etc.

It was in April, 1914, that Amanda began her suit to get rid of her husband, Herbert Thomas.

In the papers which started the action is an affidavit sworn to by Benjamin, the detective, in which he says he was engaged in February, 1914, to run down the evidence against Amanda's husband. Detective Benjamin hopped on a train that day and went over to Boston, where he took a room at the Quincy House. For nine long weeks Detective Benjamin patiently trailed Herbert Thomas around town, night and day, following him to theatres, hotels, apartments, pool rooms, etc. If Herbert went out of town Detective Benjamin pursued him on his trips.

And then follow a bunch of affidavits from Amanda's little army of sleuths, friends, relatives and other investigators and evidence-getters.

The Judge appointed a referee to hear the testimony in the case, and the referee held a hearing on June 12, 1914.

One after another the little army came forward and gave their testimony or their depositions were offered.

William H. Benjamin, chief of the detective forces, explained how he located Herbert Thomas at an apartment house on Columbus avenue, in Boston, on February 19, and with correct Sherlock Holmes instinct went and engaged a room in the house as near as possible to young Thomas. Every time Thomas left the house the sleuth followed him. He tells of trailing Thomas night and day, and watching him eat, drink, work and amuse himself.

Herbert Thomas appears to have gone about his business and to have taken his evenings for amusement.

Among the various episodes Detective Benjamin mentions one evening when Thomas and two other young men were eating in a Chinese chop suey parlor, they made the acquaintance of some young women and withdrew to the privacy of some curtained booth. To the sorrow of Detective Benjamin the party remained for several hours screened from view behind the curtains.

And so for more than nine long weeks—for exactly sixty-four long days and nights—the chief detective patiently followed Thomas, waiting outside of places where he did not dare enter and questioning persons as to who was inside with Thomas. He trailed him along in and out of the Crown Cafe, Young's Hotel, Hotel Plaza, Boston Gardens, National Theatre, Clarendon Hotel, General Post Office (especially window T of general delivery), Hinckley & Co., Navarre Cafe, Loew's Theatre, Huntington Avenue Theatre, Palace Billiard Rooms, Massachusetts Fire Insurance Building, James Theatre, Minerva Cafe, Adams House, South Station, New Castle Apartments, Boston Commons, Quincy House, Beacon Theatre and on business trips to Providence, R. I., Cambridge and East Boston.

Detective Benjamin tells how he rented a room directly over the room Thomas occupied, and spent many hours with his ear riveted to the hot air pipe, which the detective said carried conversation in Thomas's room to the detective's room on the floor above. In this way, also, he could hear Thomas moving about and hear his door close, and thus knew when Thomas left his apartment.

On one occasion the detective tells of hearing through the hot air pipe the sound of voices in the room below. He! one was a feminine voice! The noise indicated that Thomas and his fair companion were about to leave the room, so Detective Benjamin tiptoed out into the hall and down the stairs to follow them, when to his chagrin Benjamin found he was a moment too soon and he ran

plumb into Thomas and his companion. The lady was a little nervous and turned to go back to the room. The detective says Thomas reassured her and said that there was nothing to be disturbed about.

But immediately after that Thomas moved to new apartments on Massachusetts avenue. Benjamin, through the hot air pipe, knew what was up and followed Thomas to his new address.

Weeks had been going by and Detective Benjamin had apparently not been getting the real hot stuff that was wanted. So a new person appears on the scene. It was Louise Yeoman, one of Mrs. Thomas's servants, a very garrulous and a very busy person.

When the Yeoman woman stepped off the train from New York she picked up the reins of authority very quickly. It was on April 12, 1914, that Yeoman got on the job. She held a quick consultation with Detective Benjamin, learned of the change of address of Thomas and at once secured a room for herself on Massachusetts avenue, directly opposite the house where Thomas had moved. She would do a little amateur sleuthing for Amanda. A diagram, with distances and angles of visibility, sworn to, showing the position of houses, windows, peep holes, etc., was introduced in Louise's testimony.

In characterizing the various parts of this little divorce drama it is probable that Louise Yeoman's part would be called the comedy part. Her garrulous chatter and funny little loquacious trivialities introduce a quality of unconscious humor in the sombre melodrama of Amanda and her second divorce.

"I was in a Childs restaurant," Yeoman says in describing her first day of trailing Thomas in Boston, "eating buckwheat cakes, which I am very fond of." Thomas appeared from the house across the way, and Louise, making a hasty settlement of the bill, hustled out on to the sidewalk and down the street hot foot after the unsuspecting Herbert Thomas. Whether Louise was compelled to leave unclean any of those buckwheat cakes she forgot to mention—and this seems to be about the only thing related to her connection with the case that is not fully and volubly gone into in minute detail.

According to the Yeoman woman's testimony she glued her eye to the window of her room in the house opposite the building where Thomas had his apartment, and on the very first day was rewarded by seeing a woman in the Thomas apartment—and the female was in a "corset cover"! Not only this, but the creature was brushing her hair. That there might be nothing of the episode left unrecorded for the Judge to ponder, Yeoman completes the detail of this vision in these words:

"And I said to myself that I thought she had beautiful hair—it was chestnut brown hair."

The chief detective, Benjamin, started work in February. The Yeoman woman arrived on the job on April 12. And on April 20 Mr. John Caskie steps off the train in Boston and joins the forces of evidence collectors. This man Caskie was Mrs. Thomas's own brother, and he was "an adjuster" for the Interborough Rapid Transit from New York. Did Shonts get Brother John his job with the Interborough and then loan him to Sister Amanda, at the expense of the Interborough, to work up her divorce case?

According to Brother John's testimony, he and Detective Benjamin followed Herbert Thomas around for several days, chiefly watching him in restaurants.

But for some reason it was necessary to call up reserves. Detective Benjamin, Lady's Maid Louise Yeoman and Brother John Caskie were not quite equal to the job. Two more detectives were called in—Turner and Duren. Turner rented a room back of Thomas's on the same floor. Duren was set to work watching.

With Herbert Thomas watched in front by Louise Yeoman and in the rear by Detective Turner and with John Caskie on patrol in the street below and Duren on post, Detective Benjamin found time to hunt up some odds and ends of affidavits to help things along.

He secured a sworn statement from Fannie L. Beals, the housekeeper at the Columbus avenue apartment. She had seen a woman visit Thomas, and on one occasion Thomas and some lady friend "playfully" invited her out to dinner with them.

Detective Benjamin also hunted up a woman named Lena J. Rives, a milliner, who testified that she had a

President Shonts at the time he and Mrs. Thomas were travelling around Europe and America together, but Amanda had not yet secured a divorce from Herbert Thomas.

husband on the floor below Thomas at the Columbus avenue address. Mrs. Mitchell once served as a sort of latchkey for Thomas and some woman friend one night when Thomas unfortunately had forgotten his own key and was compelled to ring the bell. Mrs. Mitchell also thought she had heard "pet names" on the floor above. On another occasion she was watching her husband playing solitaire in their rooms, and there was perfect silence when—a pair of shoes, one after another, dropped on the floor, and then A SECOND PAIR OF SHOES DROPPED ON THE FLOOR ABOVE!

Mrs. Mitchell remembered this significant occurrence of two pairs of shoes dropping in a room where only one pair should have dropped, and woke her husband out of his study of the game of solitaire by saying, "Well, I guess they're in for the night."

And at this point in the testimony an interesting thing developed. Mrs. Mitchell remarked that she was not nat-

Simple pose of Mrs. Thomas near the building where Thomas had his apartment. From her window, she declared, she was able to see a female figure in underwear in Herbert Thomas's room. Still another woman was dug up, a Mrs. Alice Josephine Mitchell, who had apartments with her

